

CHAPTER XI

ENVIRONMENT

No one who has taken a trip to Brighton—who has fled from the exhausting heat of a London August to the crisp air of the Alps, or the breezes of Scotland will deny for a moment the exhilarating effect of the change in surroundings. And no one who has visited a club in the East End of London but has been struck with the effect of city life in sharpening the features and paling the complexion. That environment affects men for good and evil is indisputable. It may affect their physical growth and form : it may affect their character : it may affect their habits. A tropical climate appears to stifle the energy of European settlers: the extraordinary development in means of locomotion, which is one of the characteristic features of our times, has beyond doubt stimulated a change of spirit in modern Europe. Do such influences as these affect the race as well as the individual ? Do they touch the reproductive cells from which new individuals arise, so that they start in life with an advantage or a handicap ? This question is of immense importance. In so far as environment affects individuals, its influence may be corrected by a change of surroundings, or, perhaps, by a change of culture. But if it affects the germs which carry on the race, the peculiarities that it causes become a heritage which may hardly be

